THIRD GENERATION NIGERIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS: A STUDY IN FEMINISM

A SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED TO

SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY, NANDED

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ENGLISH

UNDER THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

BY

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1.1 Title of the Research Proposal:

THIRD GENERATION NIGERIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS: A STUDY IN FEMINISM

1.2 Introduction:

This proposed research project aims to explore a comprehensive analysis of the works and contribution of the Third Generation Nigerian Women Novelists through a feminist perspective. It is quite notable that decades ago the Nigerian Literature had been dominated by the male authors of the contemporary society with the female authors struggling for their voices to be heard.

Therefore, this research project is an investigation of the themes and motifs dealt by the Third Generation Nigerian Women Novelists which include the themes of gender bias, racism, class, sexuality, discrimination on the basis of religion, etc. Nigerian women have for ages faced gender bias and inferior position in the society. This project thus attempts to examine the terrifying first hand experiences of the Nigerian women as produced by the writers themselves in their works.

In this regard, the present research attempts to examine the emergence of this group of writers called the "Third Generation Novelists" and to explore their works and contribution to the Nigerian literature with a feminist approach. The emergence of this group of writers have gained critical acclaim for their precise and bold presentation of these complex issues. These writers have been at the forefront of the feminist movement in Nigerian Literature challenging the traditional patriarchal norms and stereotypes through their works.

1.3 Background:

Nigeria has a rich literary tradition which has gifted the world with a number of amazing writers. Since the beginning, Nigerian women have always challenged and raised their voice against gender inequality, patriarchal traditions, sexuality, racism, religious discrimination, etc. Like many other African countries, Nigeria has a history of colonization which has had severe impacts on their social, political and economic systems. Moreover, Nigeria has a patriarchal society where women have always been silenced and discriminated against. Therefore, the issue of gender bias has permeated the Nigerian society for decades.

The issue of gender bias revolves around the unethical treatment of women as being considered inferior to the male members of the society. It also centers around the fact that the female members of the society not being able to enjoy the same rights as their male counterparts. Also literature had been dominated by the male authors of Nigeria for a really long time whereas women did not get the recognition that they deserved. This very issue of gender bias along with classism, sexism, racism, etc. has been persistent throughout Nigeria for several decades.

So, the emergence of the third generation writers has been a boon to world literature as these writers fearlessly brought to light the societal constructs and many grim incidents and contributed to the social awareness of the Nigerian society. The literary landscape of Nigeria has been shaped by the contributions of women writers. These women writers with their excellent narrative techniques, their engagement with the socio-cultural issues and their exploration of feminist themes exposed the catastrophe of the contemporary society. These women writers stood as the flagbearers and eventually gave momentum to the feminist movement in Nigeria.

Prominent among the Third Generation Nigerian Women Novelists are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie whose debut novel "Purple Hibiscus" (2003) was awarded the 2005 Commonwealth Writers' Prize and Sefi Atta whose "Everything Good Will Come" (2005) won the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa among others.

1.4 Literature Review:

Since Nigerian women had been living in a patriarchal society for a long time which led to them being denied equitable rights and status in the society. With passage of time, self-awareness about the same grew among the Nigerian women which gave impetus to the feminist movement in Nigeria which began in the twentieth century in America. However, the feminist movement in Nigeria was different from the one in America which came to be known as the African feminism or the Black Feminism.

The Nigerian literary landscape has been dominated by male authors for several decades with the female authors being muted. However, in recent years, a new generation of Nigerian women novelists has emerged, whose works have gained international acclaim for their exploration of complex issues such as gender, race, class, identity, violence and culture, etc. This revolution has given the world some amazing and influential writers including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta among many others becoming household names.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her debut novel "Purple Hibiscus" (2003) explores the themes of identity, freedom, patriarchy, oppression and tradition. The story revolves around a fifteen year old girl Kambili Achike and her older brother Jaja. In this novel Adichie presents her childhood experiences and exposes fearlessly the evils persisting in the contemporary Nigerian society. Her second novel "Half of a Yellow Sun" (2006) has won the Orange Prize for Fiction.

In her Bildungsroman or Coming of Age novel "Everything Good Will Come" (2005), Sefi Atta explores the themes of Nigerian Politics, sexual exploitation, gender inequality and women's plight for freedom through the character of Enitan. In her another novel "Swallow", Sefi Atta speaks up about corruption, love, friendship, morality and identity.

Chika Unigwe, another major Nigerian novelist whose debut novel "De Feniks" (2005) was shortlisted for Vrouw en Kultuur debuutprijs for the best first novel by a female writer. Her second novel "On Black Sisters Street" was originally written and published in Dutch in 2008 and later translated in English as "On Black Sisters Street".

The article titled "Motif/ves of Justice in Writings by Third Generation Nigerian Women" by Shalini Nadaswaran describes how the third generation Nigerian women novelists continue the legacy of the writers of their previous generation (first and second generation) and explore the persistent criminal activities against women carried openly in the Nigerian society.

1.5 Objectives:

The objectives of the proposed research project are as follows:

1) To explore the feminist themes in the works of third generation Nigerian women novelists.
2) To represent the adversities of patriarchal society.
3) To study the intersectionality of gender, culture, tradition and identity.
4) To study the effects of gender discrimination on society.
5) To represent domestic violence, sexuality, slavery and class oppression.
6) To analyze the impact of third generation Nigerian women novelists works on the development of Nigerian literature.
7) To assess the strategies and techniques employed by the third generation Nigerian women novelists in challenging patriarchal norms and stereotypes.
8) To analyze the key themes and motifs in the works of third generation Nigerian women novelists.

1.6 Methodology:

The present research proposes to undertake a mixed-methods approach, which shall include both qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. The study will begin by a comprehensive analysis of the contribution of the third generation Nigerian women novelists to Nigerian literature and feminism. The analysis will comprise of a close reading of the select literary works and will be followed by a qualitative analysis. This analysis will also examine the narrative techniques and ideas employed by the third generation women novelists to expose the unfair practices against women prevalent in the Nigerian society.

The research project shall also undertake comparative, interpretative and analytical methods to study the development of Nigerian literature with the works of third generation Nigerian women novelists through a feminist lens.

1.7 The Scope and Limitations of the Research :

The third generation Nigerian women novelists have been successful in spreading awareness about women's rights and thereby creating a positive impact on the society. Their immense contribution enables us to make a comparative analysis and study the transition of women to empowerment. Though the contribution of the third generation Nigerian women novelists is enormous in the field of literature, there are certain limitations to the proposed research project viz. limited representation, language barriers, western centric bias, etc.

1.8 Chapter Scheme:

The study will tentatively comprise of six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

(Nigerian Literary landscape, emergence of the third generation

Novelists, major writers - their life and works, Purpose of study, Objectives, research problems, research methodology)

Chapter 2: The Concept of Feminism.

(History of feminism, variants of feminism, major Feminist writers and

Their contribution, distinction between black feminism and white Feminism)

Chapter 3: Critical analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's select novels.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an African writer who has gained international recognition owing to her bold and fearless representation of women's exploitation and their ill treatment in the patriarchal society. This chapter explores the major themes and narrative techniques used by the author.

Chapter 4: Critical analysis of Sefi Atta's select novels.

The present chapter deals with the Nigerian women's experiences in a patriarchal society and explores the themes of domestic violence, identity, religion and culture and their roles in suppressing women.

Chapter 5: Critical analysis of Chika Unigwe's select novels.

Chika Unigwe is a writer who does not shy away from controversial issues. This chapter gives a description about her techniques and methods of writing and their impact on the readers. She majorly deals with the themes of migration, loneliness, love, etc.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

Intersectionality of the issues of gender, race, culture, love, religion, class and education on the grounds of the above study.

Select Bibliography.

1.90 Select Bibliography:

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